

# Lithuanians Blockade KGB's Gates

## *Removal of Files Halted*

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VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., Jan. 29—For the sixth straight day, Lithuanian political leaders and their followers today blocked trucks from leaving through the imposing gates of KGB secret police headquarters here. The face-off outside the block-long citadel of Moscow's ebbing power in the Lithuanian Soviet Republic is a symbol of change as the Baltic states move in the direction of secession from the Soviet Union.

The blockade, which began last Tuesday night, 10 days after the visit here of President Mikhail Gorbachev, is similar to one mounted by East Germans against secret police headquarters in East Berlin but is believed to be the first in this country. It developed when Romualdas Ozolas, a leading member of Lithuania's pro-independence movement Sajudis, charged that trucks were carting off the records of KGB misdeeds to safe storage in Moscow as Soviet power declines in Lithuania.

After making the charges, which were rejected by the local KGB chief in an earlier exchange on the issue, Ozolas appeared on local television to appeal for popular backing to stop removal of documents from the imposing, dirty gray KGB headquarters.

Despite the previously vaunted power of the secret police, residents of Vilnius responded immediately and in large numbers to the appeal, mounting a round-the-clock vigil of the KGB headquarters' two truck gates and of the gate of the prison, which can be reached from secret police headquarters through an underground tunnel.

Several trucks were stopped by the human chain. Those that would not stop were followed through town by cars manned with citizens wielding home video cameras, which produced dramatic pictures for Vil-

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nus television, now under the control of the local breakaway Communist Party.

Arvydas Zygas, an American exchange professor from Illinois of Lithuanian descent, said that standing on the picket line outside secret police headquarters was "the symbolic turning point of my life. I was no longer afraid of an institution that until now had been untouchable. . . . Until that point, just the mention of KGB could instill fear in people."

"We are using [the blockade] as a tool to separate the KGB from Moscow," said Algis Chekuolis, a pro-independence leader who is also a member of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, which has declared its independence from the Moscow-led party.

Chekuolis, who was on the picket line from midnight to 6 a.m. the first night, said the KGB is one of several governmental institutions that still take orders direct from Moscow without regard for local Communist Party or provincial government institutions. He and others said a local demand was that Lithuanian KGB chief Eduardas Eismuntas be replaced by an official acceptable to local authorities.

Pro-independence officials said other institutions in which the local Communist Party has little or no influence include the Vilnius branch of the Interior Ministry, the public prosecutor's office and the offices of the ministries of transportation and communications. The Council of Ministers in Moscow, which coordinates government activity under the prime minister's office, is not implementing economic resolutions of the Lithuanian legislature, these officials said.

Vilnius was founded a century before Columbus discovered America in 1492, and it retains many relics of its distinctly Lithuanian culture. Following the secret Nazi-Soviet pact, Lithuania and the other two Baltic nations—Latvia and Estonia—were forcibly annexed into the Soviet Union in 1940. Today all three of these non-Slavic Soviet republics are edging toward secession from the Soviet Union in different ways, to the displeasure of Gorbachev and others in Moscow.

Present-day Vilnius presents some strange sights, including the orange, green and red Lithuanian national flag flying from many buildings rather than the red hammer-and-sickle flag of the U.S.S.R. Until about 18 months ago, when the independence drive began to accelerate as Gorbachev loosened the reins of control from Moscow, fly-



BY LARRY FOGEL—THE WASHINGTON POST

ing the Lithuanian flag was grounds for arrest.

At the park in front of the building of the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee, which is now in the hands of pro-independence leaders, a big banner in Lithuania's national colors proclaims: "Without Sovereignty There is No Freedom." Behind the banner is a statue of a Soviet general killed in World War II, and young Soviet soldiers out for a Sunday stroll from their barracks walk by.

On Sunday in the historic cathedral in the center of town, Mass was said by Catholic priests just as it was for centuries in the pre-Soviet era of Vilnius's history. The cathedral had been turned into an auto repair facility and then into a museum honoring atheism, according to local residents, until it was returned to the Catholic authorities in October 1988, in a ceremony that prompted much rejoicing.

Lenin Avenue has been renamed Gediminas Avenue, in honor of the founder of Vilnius rather than the founder of the Soviet state.

July 21 Street, named decades ago to honor the date on which the Lithuanian parliament applied for admission to the Soviet Union nearly 50 years ago, has been renamed February 16 Street, marking the date in 1918 when Lithuania declared its independence following the proclamation of President Woodrow Wilson's famous "Fourteen Points" at the end of World War I.

One of the blocked vehicular entrances to KGB headquarters is on the former July 21 Street, now February 16 Street. The protesters at each gate in the past several days have many times numbered about a dozen, including well-dressed matrons who look as though they might have emerged from the local equivalent of the afternoon bridge club.

The picketing is scheduled to continue until early next week, when the Supreme Soviet, the republic's legislature, where pro-independence sentiment is strong, is to discuss and possibly legislate on the issue of Lithuanian KGB activity and the documents bearing on its past.